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DEVELOPING SENIOR ADMINISTRATORS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE:
THE THEORY AND REALITY OF ZAMBIA'S EXPERIENCE

by

MULENGA C. BWALYA

Political and Administrative Studies

(2) National University of Lesotho

(6) Faculty of Social Sciences Staff Seminar No. 1, 1987,
presented on 22nd January, 1987.

referred, (unrecorded)

M. C. BWALYA
(Developing Senior Administrators in Zambia)

ABSTRACT

In the paper, as a former Zambian civil servant, the author discusses the experiences of Zambia with the training and development of senior administrators. Starting with establishing the importance of Administration at the "strategic" policy or decision making, the "tactical" implementation and "feedback" levels, the paper goes on to distinguish between the "training" and the "management development" approaches to human resources development. Following a critical discussion of Zambia's experience with it at the immediate pre- and the post-independence periods, it concludes that although efforts have been made, they have fallen short of the desired levels because they concentrated on general academic and basic skills "training" rather than "management development". This was because of lack of nation-wide policy regulating senior administrative training and development programmes, little attention and commitment to senior administrative development and providing adequate resources, and too much reliance on expatriate personnel. A number of suggestions are made to resolve the problems.

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INTRODUCTION

It has now been generally accepted that Administration - that is, the activity of organising people and resources in order to achieve certain desired ends - is and will no doubt continue to be the heart and soul of the activity of modern government. Without doubt, it holds a very prominent position in the success or failure of any socio-organisational activity whether private or public. Yet, without an adequately trained, experienced and competent administrative cadre to systematically bring resources and people together to achieve certain goals, the very essence of Administration becomes doubtful. The purpose of this paper is to use the author's civil service work experience and hindsight^{1/} not only to restate some theoretical propositions about Administration, but also to make some observations on the role, experience and problems of developing senior administrators in the Zambian context.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ADMINISTRATION

We have just highlighted in the above paragraph, the extreme importance of Administration to successful socio-organisational activity. Three factors can be identified to substantiate this view. Firstly, the administrative process involves or evokes the very "strategic" decision making activity through which policies emerge. Fundamental to the formulation of relevant and effective policies are essential factors such as "... corporate planning, the manpower plan, an understanding of the learning processes, and assessment

of strengths, weaknesses and needs (both corporate and individual), knowledge of the resources available and a clear understanding of the desired objectives" (Jarmen, 1973, p.7) of the organisation and its environment.

The second important factor in the administrative process is the implementation of policies and decisions. This is essentially a "tactical" activity involving making important operational decisions, motivating, controlling and coordinating staff and organisational activities, to mention only a few principles necessary in order to meet stated organisational objectives.

Then there is thirdly, the evaluation activity which acts as "feedback" to enable necessary and appropriate regulation of and adjustment to both the "strategic" policy making and the "tactical" implementation processes.

It must be noted that, as a general rule, organisations - be they private or public - and society as a whole, have a tendency to continue expanding both in size and complexity. At the same time, and in contradistinction to the expansionary tendency, there is a counter-acting force toward what natural scientists have called entropy- that is, the continual tendency in organisms toward disorganisation and decay. Thus, while the tendency towards growth creates even more diverse and complex organisational functions, responsibilities and administrative practices, so the counter tendency toward decay continuously pushes in the opposite direction, together calling for highly skilled, sophisticated and experienced higher level administrators to cope with and contain both tendencies.

If we take the national government as the organisational unit, these trends become even more pronounced. More so in the developing countries where the state has acted more and more as the prime motivator of and investor in the socio-economic development of the majority of the people. Inevitably, there is even a greater call for skilled, experienced, competent and innovative administrators to play a crucial and central role in spearheading the process of development and minimising the effects of the entropic tendency.

In general however, it is agreed that public administrators in developing countries have been ill-prepared for this task of carrying out the increasingly complex but crucially important administrative and regulative functions. The case of Zambia is both interesting and revealing in its confirmation of this general assessment.

DEVELOPING ADMINISTRATORS: SOME CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Developing personnel, let alone administrators, points to the general concept of human resources development. In its broadest conceptualisation, a human resources development programme is any direct or indirect action taken by an organisation to change the behaviour of its members - the primary aim of which is to achieve behaviour which will help it meet its goals more efficiently and effectively (Warren, 1979, p.4; Mataferia, 1982). It therefore implies the deliberate introduction of educational, training and personnel development programmes for various members of an organisation.

Two main approaches can be identified in enforcing programmes for changing the behaviour of organisational members.

There is on the one hand what for lack of a better word is called the "Training" approach to personnel development. This is a micro-oriented approach whose chief aim is to supply the individual with specific knowledge, skills and attitudes which the organisation needs to achieve its goals. On the other hand, there is a macro-oriented approach known as "Management Development" which aims at developing and supplying rounded individuals to carry out whole groups of organisational tasks. It is this latter that is of utmost relevance to senior administrators although not to the utter exclusion of the first.

But, although these two approaches are not mutually exclusive, there is a clear dichotomy between "training" per se and "management development". Of particular emphasis in the dichotomy is the recognition that where "training" as a practical aspect of human resources development, instils problem solving skills specific to particular processes within an organisation, "management development" builds the total individual to enable him perform added and more wide-ranging responsibilities aimed at achieving the whole range of organisational goals. In short, while "training" as defined here aims at producing more skilled workers, "management development" aims at identifying and developing better managers or senior administrators.

If "management development" as we have defined it, has to build the individual managers or senior administrators in their totality for the performance of a very wide range of responsibilities to attain the whole matrix of organisational as well societal goals, then the relevant programmes have to be equally

diverse, complex, sophisticated and adaptable in order to produce today's senior public administrator. Management training and development institutions must be equally diverse, sophisticated and adaptable or responsive to the changing socio-political and economic positions of their environments if they have to succeed in their missions to create better administrators.

There is no need to imply that "management development" is necessarily or always in the form of formal seminars, workshops, courses or other programmes taken at training institutions. On the contrary, "management development" is a life-long process and often is and can be triggered on the job by proper administrative career planning as well as challenging practical assignments. Other ways of introducing the on-the-job management development process include on-the-job coaching, job rotation, self-development, appropriate use of external or internal consultants and improvements in communication within the organisation.

Whether one looks at the macro-international, national or indeed micro-organisational levels of the exercise of "management development", one has to focus not only on the formal incidences, institutions and programmes of it, but also on such on-the-job informal and sometimes unstructured processes which may be applied to achieve it. In addition to assessing the results of the application of the management development activity, one must further distinguish between the nature, objectives, content and the problems of developing senior administrators as well as whether the programmes have greater

inclination toward "training" or "management development" approaches. These are likely to reveal the sources and therefore solutions of the problems.

ZAMBIA'S EXPERIENCE IN DEVELOPING SENIOR ADMINISTRATORS

It is commonly known that the bulk of present day independent Africa has only recently restled out of the colonial yolk. The legacy of this colonial experience will take time to be obliterated from Africa's face. Consequently, in discussing Zambia's experience with the development of senior administrators, it becomes imperative to make reference to the immediate pre-independence administration and the management development practices, if any. These will play a significant role in explaining and understanding more fully any such post-independence administrative development practices.

(a) Developing Administrators in Pre-Independence Zambia

The colonial system of administration can be said to have been dualistic. Whether in the public or private sectors, the white European assumed an administrative or supervisory role while the black African was subjugated to the worker role - regardless of any training or qualifications the members of each side may have possessed. In the public sector, British Arts graduates or those with aristocratic inclinations and by virtue of those inclinations, were dispatched to come and administer law and order (Subramaniam, 1968). This gave chance to European self-styled entrepreneurs to descend either from Britain or South Africa to come and more or less freely exploit the cheap African human and material resources for high profits.

All this was done with little regard to the proper development of indigenous human and material resources. Admittedly, there is little information as to whether these European administrators themselves, once they had been posted to jobs, were exposed to formal or deliberately designed management development programmes. The normal pattern was "to grow in the job" and perhaps be promoted or sent to other colonies to carry on the law and order maintenance responsibilities. What is crystal clear however, is that Africans were generally never exposed to administrative training or development of any significance. The little training that was given was only to enable a few Africans gain the basic knowledge or skills required to provide the basic clerical and secretarial support to the British or European supervisors. To aggravate the situation even further, Africans had been banned from apprenticeships and were only rarely accepted for courses of intensive training for skilled jobs, let alone administrative roles.

Thus, at the time of independence in 1964, Zambia could only boast of 100 Zambians with graduate degrees and 1,212 Secondary School leavers (Cabinet Office, 1966; Mwanakatwe, 1974). Although the vast majority of the workforce at Independence were Zambians, few of them had had the opportunity of post-primary school education during the colonial period. Thus, most jobs requiring post-primary school education were held by European expatriates. This meant that few Zambians had had the opportunity to gain the necessary skills, experience and competence to enable them take up confidently responsible management or senior administrative positions at Independence.

(b) Developing Senior Administrators in Post-Independence Zambia

i. The first decade of independence

Following political independence, the quest for more development lured the new Government into adopting a more interventionist strategy and to take on more and more responsibilities for developing the nation. As a consequence of increased government activity, the civil service alone had to grow more than four-fold by 1975 compared with its size at independence in 1964 (Mwanakatwe, 1975, p.13). This unprecedented growth was coupled with the almost virtue Zambianisation of the civil service, especially in the administrative cadre. Clearly, the preparation of the civil servants for effectively and efficiently carrying out the increased functions of government was an inevitable activity.

Consequently, immediately following independence, Zambia had to adopt two serious approaches to human resources development. The first was to accelerate progress in the field of basic or general academic education - that is, primary, secondary and tertiary education where the latter incorporated what we have defined as "training" approach. Thus, in the years that followed, tremendous strides were made in increasing both the numbers of schools and colleges and their outputs. By 1977, every District had a secondary school fed from a large number of primary schools.

Furthermore, a number of technical education and vocational training colleges also sprung up in each province which were crowned by the opening of the University of Zambia in 1966.

Indeed, the proclamation of free education for all up to University level, is one important gesture of the Government's commitment to overcoming the legacy of limited and discriminatory colonial African education. These facilities together with training abroad, boosted the numbers of trained Zambians occupying various technical and some administrative positions in both the public, parastatal and private institutions.^{2/}

The second approach toward human resources development was the lifting of the colonial ban on African apprenticeships and the provision of more on-the-job oriented training opportunities. This was especially crucial at a time when previously exclusively white administrative jobs were opened to Africans. Those who aspired for these new openings needed immediate on-the-job training or apprenticeship.

But although the public service had thus grown in size, level of Zambianisation and the number of training facilities, its performance was deteriorating every year and proportionately with the departure of more experienced European expatriates. Moreover, further complaints of shoddy performance and administrative incompetency were being levelled against the public service from every corner.

In a survey of the Zambia Managerial Manpower and Training Needs of the Private and Parastatal Sectors, it was confirmed that performance was poor because Zambia suffered from a serious shortage of trained and qualified managers and supervisors in these sectors (Office of the Prime Minister, 1977, p.iv). As a consequence, the country had relied heavily on expatriates for the highly managerial positions. Indeed, some of the major

public corporations such as the Mines, Zambia Airways and INDECO had began to enter into management contracts with foreign management consulting firms at very high expense to the nation, in order to circumvent poor managerial performance by Zambian personnel.

Why was this the case? Our own analysis of the situation is based on two main premises. Firstly, until the mid-1970s, the Government and such private organisations as showed interest, were concentrating on general education and the "training" approach to human resources development. Clearly, this pre-occupation with the basic education and training approach was necessary and inevitable in order to develop, as it were, from nothing a reliable body of Zambian personnel with the basic academic education and skills to keep the wheels of the economy turning. However, though inevitable given the paucity of educated and trained local personnel at independence, the concentration on basic education and training, at the expense of "management development", was detrimental to the whole management process of the national development programmes.

Secondly, even where appropriate institutions such as NIPA, Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation (MEF), and various departmental and sectoral training centres were established for the purpose, they tended rather to concentrate on skills and lower level training. In point of fact, the little management development activity that ensued was of the informal and unstructured on-the-job type. The effect of the deficiency in the management development programmes and trained managerial cadre on the proper planning, coordination and evaluation of

public and private organisational functions could not be but disastrous.

ii. Developments after the first decade of independence

Even after the monumentally distressing revelations of the first "Managerial Manpower and Training Needs Survey" in 1977 about the great shortage of managerial staff in the private and parastatal organisations and its adverse effects on national development performance, little seems to have been done on the survey's recommendations. Management training and development in parastatal and private organisations has been recognised, but has been allowed to proceed in a largely unplanned and at best haphazard, manner even today.

Certainly, some institutions such as the Mines under ZIMCO, INDECO, ZSIC, etc. have been conducting inhouse management training and development programmes of some sort for their staff. However, there lacks a national policy regulating their manpower development plans and priorities as well as the subject contents of programmes. As such, there is no uniformity about professionally acceptable programme content. Nor, does such a hotch-potch of uncoordinated management training and development institutions and programmes help to avoid costly overlapping or duplication of functions.

With respect to the civil service, it was only since 1979, after various consultations with the Commonwealth Secretariat, CIDA, ECA and British ODA that Government began to recognise that the civil service had failed to operate effectively and efficiently because of inherent deficiencies in the capabilities of its senior administrators. It had slowly dawned on the

Government that to overcome these deficiencies, there was need for bold programmes for training and development of the senior administrative staff in the civil service (Cabinet Office, 1983).

Accordingly, in 1981, Cabinet Office initiated research with the assistance of ODA to look at the organisation of training and administrative development in the Zambian civil service (Carmichael, 1985). Among other findings, the research revealed that the civil service training in general, and the development of senior administrators in particular, have not been effective in Zambia because of the following problems (Cabinet Office, 1983, p.7):

1. lack of a clear nation-wide training policy
2. lack of high-level commitment to training
3. limited appreciation of training by line managers
4. ineffective training staff
5. duplication of responsibilities
6. poor utilisation of trained staff, and
7. lack of evaluation of training.

These revelations, as expected, set in motion a flurry of activity within the Government. A fairly elaborate structure was introduced from 1983 onwards, to deal with civil service training as a whole. Firstly, a centralised training directorate (DMDT) was created within Cabinet Office to deal with the entire civil service training. Secondly, a cadre of Manpower Development Officers (MDOs) was created. These were seconded to ministries and provincial capitals to continuously assess

the manpower training and development needs there and to closely liaise with appropriate training institutions in developing and providing relevant programmes. And thirdly, a Cabinet Circular was produced which set out the guidelines and procedures for manpower development in the public service, thus purporting to set out a national manpower development policy (Carmichael, 1985). More recently, there is a programme of streamlining and reducing the size of the civil service with a view to reduce waste and increase operational efficiency.

Undoubtedly, these were and are steps forward in the establishment of an effective human resources development system in the country. But although these changes have only recently been introduced to show significant results, it seems clear that the changes or innovations will not lead to a dramatic change in the situation for the reasons that follow.

(c) Problems with Improving Senior Administrators in Zambia's Public Service

The main reasons for the almost virtual absence of adequately trained Zambian senior administrators and managers in the Government and parastatal sectors, and the reasons why the problem will continue to exist - in addition to those already identified - can be presented in four broad groupings, namely:

(i) lack of nation-wide policy and action plan for senior administrative training and development; (ii) inadequacy of senior administrative training and development institutions and programmes; (iii) lack of commitment within Government to the training and development of senior administrators; and

(iv) reliance on expatriate and foreign management contract personnel.

i. Lack of a nation-wide senior administrative training and development policy

The efforts by Government in this respect, which have been discussed above, clearly fall short of the basic requirements. They did not evolve a comprehensive enough training and development policy. Such a training and development policy needed to offer proper guidelines for the training needs assessment; design and planning of training programmes; provision, organisation and improvement of resources (both physical, material, financial and human) for training and development; monitoring and evaluation. All the Government did was providing a physical structure without the necessary resources as energy for the structure to function. In particular, the 1984 Cabinet Circular on Training in the Public Service was conspicuously silent on senior level administrative training and development. It therefore, left both the MDOs and training institutions numb or guessing on what exactly to do about senior administrative training and development - essentially "management development" was left out.

Moreover, as a consequence of inadequate guidelines for the provision, organisation and improvement of resources and facilities, no concerted effort was made to streamline them and cut costs through integrated and closely complementary administrative training and development institutions and programmes. Nor, were appropriately qualified and competent

personnel appointed to assess the manpower training and development needs in ministries and departments as well as to liaise with appropriate institutions. For example, the weakest civil servants whom their ministries and departments did not like were often dumped to be appointed in the DMDT as MDOs at the time of introducing or establishing the Directorate. These could not be expected to effectively and competently perform the complex functions of manpower needs assessment. Unless a nation-wide comprehensive policy is pronounced spelling out the aims, nature, structure, resources and the regulatory machinery of training in general, and administrative manpower development in particular, the present efforts will remain haphazard, non-directed, wasteful and therefore of limited impact.

ii. Inadequate senior administrative training and development institutions and programmes

As already explained, apart from a hotch-potch of inhouse training centres organised by individual enterprises, the parastatal and private sectors rely only on the ZIMCO Institute of Management, MEF and various technical education and vocational training colleges in the country for training. Many of these inhouse training centres are too small and specialised to provide adequate physical, material and human resource capacity for national level training and administrative manpower development in particular. Moreover, by their nature, technical and vocational training colleges concentrate on technical skills (i.e. training approach) rather than management development.

In the civil service sector, apart from small ministerial and departmental training schools, which may provide partial

administrative training and development programmes, the National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA) is the only institution charged with the responsibility for senior level administrative training and development. Unfortunately, NIPA has to combine this mammoth task with all in-service training for the whole Zambian civil service. The sheer numbers of non-administrative cadre, coupled with the ease of training lower levels, mean that senior administrative training is overshadowed.

Thus, although NIPA has trained over 24,000 ^{3/} civil servants since independence, until recently, it has concentrated on the basic skills training for clerical, junior executive and secretarial level civil servants. It is only since 1978 that NIPA introduced the "management development" programmes for public officers. But even this largely affected the middle level (i.e. Principals and Assistant Secretaries) rather than the top (i.e. Under Secretaries and Permanent Secretaries). The first Under Secretaries programmes were only introduced in 1983 under the auspices of this author.

The alternative of overseas training is becoming more and more problematic. With the increasing problem of foreign exchange, the country could ill-afford to send as many officers as required for senior administrative courses abroad. At the same time, one would favour the view that local training and manpower development would tend to be more relevant and immediately responsive to the needs of the environment.

iii. Lack of commitment within government to training and development of senior administrators

While in rhetoric there seems to be a lot of good will among the top echelons of the Zambian public service towards management development, some signs seem to show little commitment. There seems to be little conviction about the determinate role of management development in the efficient administration and successful implementation of national development programmes. Consequently, the view that "managers or administrators can grow in their jobs" without training or development seems to have prevailed.^{4/} The result is that little actual support is provided to develop, increase and improve institutions and programmes for training and developing senior administrators.

The case of NIPA can be used to illustrate this lack of real commitment. While it is widely recognised that NIPA, as the sole formal civil service senior administrative development institution, has inherent physical, material, manpower and status deficiencies which have hampered effective and efficient performance of its functions, little has been done by the Government to overcome these deficiencies.

Numerous reports ^{5/} have for the past six years been presented proposing that changes, among other things, in the organisational structure, conditions of service and status of NIPA are imperative for it to improve its performance and contribute to the development of public administrators. Yet, there has been only luke warm response from the Government. It could not tackle the fundamental problems of lack of integrated operational autonomy, lack of attractive conditions

of service for staff, adequate funds to enable the Institute acquire the necessary materials and provide adequate physical facilities such as classrooms, student hostels and staff offices. While it cannot of course be denied that the intractable financial constraints have something to do with the lack of response, as was the common reply from Government. But this argument cannot be vindicated when large sums are instead expended on relatively unproductive activities, such as the construction of a 70million Kwacha UNIP Headquarters, the large and very expensive delegations to meetings and state visits abroad, lavish expenditures on 20th Independence Anniversary Celebrations, only to mention a few.

Moreover, most senior administrators shun locally organised senior management development programmes, preferring to go abroad. They have often refused to attend seminars, workshops and courses organised within Zambia believing that there was nothing new they could learn from them. Instead, they have sent junior officers to these local programmes for whom they were not intended. This renders the exercise of little value to its intentions. This behaviour reflects at least two factors. The first is that because inadequate attention and resources have been directed to the improvement of senior administrative development institutions and programmes, these have failed to attract and meet the needs of senior administrators - hence the shunning. Secondly, the fact that Government seemingly condons the shunning of local programmes and preference of more expensive foreign training by senior administrators is indicative of its general lack of commitment to increased and

consolidated senior management development.

iv. Reliance on expatriate and foreign management contract personnel

It was suggested earlier that many private and public enterprises resorted to the employment of expatriates and entering into management contracts with foreign consultants in order to circumvent the poor local administrative capacities. This has exacerbated the problem of developing senior administrators in Zambia for the following reasons.

Firstly, while as an interim measure, these contracts may be essential, they nevertheless often do retard the indigenisation and development of local senior administrative personnel. At the same time, they suck away large sums of money which could well be used in the development of more local personnel, while subtly these expatriates put deliberate breaks on the pace of indigenisation. This is well known and needs no further substantiation and is done by claiming non-readiness of local counterparts to take on the responsibilities on their own right.

Secondly, management contract and expatriate personnel are often the planners and trainers in their organisations. Naturally, the management plans and training programmes they will design will be biased to experiences and procedures of the countries and cultures of their origin. Their commitments and actions will tend to be half-hearted since not only will they quit after two or three years, but they will not be responsible for the consequences of their designs. The end result is a constraint on indigenisation of the top administrative cadres.

Thirdly, no amount of senior administrative training can take the place of actual administrative experience. Therefore, the continuing occupation of strategic and responsible senior positions by expatriates and contract personnel has constrained and will continue to hinder Zambians from learning by doing - that is, experiential and systematic on-the-job learning. In order to speed up the pace, the Government must take the very bold action of placing academically qualified and promising Zambians into more responsible administrative positions held currently by expatriates or Zambian "dead wood". By propping them up with adequate formal and organised on-the-job administrative training and development, more solid and effective senior administrators will be born. It should not, of course, be pretended that all will be well overnight as developing senior administrators is a life-long process, but the sooner we begin the earlier we will reach the optimum.

CONCLUSION AND THE WAY AHEAD

Clearly, the performance of Government in senior administrative training and development leaves much to be desired. The approach which the Zambian Government must take is to refuse to "cry over spilt milk" and to take the "bull by its horns". The operational strategy for introducing an effective human resources development programme in general, and senior administrative development in particular, should follow the steps outlined below.

First, the Government must analyse as systematically and precisely as possible, the management training and development needs of the country and the public service in particular.

Armed with this knowledge or data, it will then be possible to design a nation-wide policy for human resources development, with that of developing senior administrators clearly spelt out. Such a policy will guide the various public agencies, including management training and development institutions, in designing relevant programmes, identifying the most appropriate work plans and ensuring the allocation of adequate human, financial and other material resources necessary for effective implementation of the programmes.

These in turn will assist the Government in drawing up and implementing detailed programmes for effectively monitoring, controlling and evaluating the managerial/administrative and other human resource capacities. In all these activities however, success requires that real, and not lip-service, Government commitment to action is applied.

NOTES

1. The author worked as Deputy Principal of the Institute of Public Administration (NIPA), Zambia's Civil Service staff training institution for three and half years from August, 1982 to November, 1985. During this time, he had opportunity to observe the whole public service at work as well as being involved in identifying some of its training needs and designing programmes to meet them.
2. Although even by 1984 only 76 out of 15,334 public managers or senior administrators had University degrees, the majority of the rest have had short term, often introductory courses of one sort or another. See US-AID 1985, p.6).
3. Computed by the author from available attendance lists from 1965 to 1985. No such lists were available for the period before 1965. Indeed, even during the period covered, one cannot be certain that the coverage was comprehensive.
4. This reflects a continuation of the longstanding belief, for example, among the British, that administrators are "born" and not "made" or trained. See (Robson, 1937; Mataferia, 1982; Kirk-Greene, 1970).
5. These include official reports by consultants from AAPAM, ESAMI, ECA and various ODA Technical Assistance Reviews. NIPA has itself made detailed suggestions and recommendations on the reorganisation of the Institute for effect performance to no avail.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAPAM - African Association of Public Administration and Management

CIDA - Canadian International Development Agency

DMDT - Directorate of Manpower Development and Training

ESAMI - Eastern and Southern African Managemant Institute

ECA - United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

INDECO- Industrial Development Corporation

MDO - Manpower Development Officer

MEF - Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation

NIPA -- National Institute of Public Administration

ODA - British Overseas Development Administration

UNIP - United National Independence Party

US-AID- United States Agency for International Development

ZIMCO - Zambia Industrial and Mining Corporation

ZSIC - Zambia State Insurance Corporation



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